

**Four Hundred Thousand Men Who Wear
the Bronze Button and Believe in
"Fraternity, Charity, Loyalty."**

The first constitution, agreed upon in Springfield, May 15, 1896, provided for precinct organizations, to be known as post-branches, county organizations, to be known as departmental organizations, to be known as district State organizations, to be known as departments, and the national organization, to be known as "The Grand Army of the Republic."

Before another post was established, the department staff had been agreed upon with Major Stephenson as department commander. This done, the department officers devoted themselves to the organization of posts. The second post was established at Springfield, Illinois. In June, after the organization of the first post in April, was held a convention of the members of the Grand Army and other fraternal organizations, which sprang up rapidly in Illinois. Another regular meeting was held in July. It was in fact, the first Department Encampment. Major General John M. Palmer, now Senator for Palmer, was elected department commander. The organization spread into

stage, would have accommodated double the number of delegates which came to the convention.

Morrison's Opera Hall, the birthplace and the cradle of the Grand Army as a national organization, is now but a memory, being destroyed by fire shortly after the meeting. Were it in existence to-day, at the northwest corner of Maryland and Maryland streets, it would be the Mecca to which thousands of visitors would flock, and bronze busts would repose on the mantels.

While John B. Holien was giving a lecture the building was discovered to be on fire. Two or three cool-headed men noticed the flames, but they were too cool to withdraw with their friends without show of haste. Mr. Gough, who was in the building, happened to be in the rear of the hall, and he could not divine the cause until, when the audience room was nearly deserted, he was informed that the building was on fire. The Journal could find no record of the building, but Mr. Oscar D. Bohlen, of D. A. Bohlen & Son, architects, found the plans of the building, which were made 10 years ago, among his papers, so that

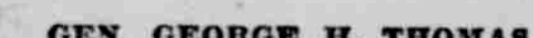
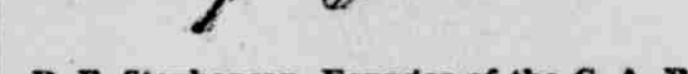
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The first day's business session closed with the appointment of a committee to invite Gov. O. F. Morton to address the convention in the evening, which he did. The speaker was Gen. J. M. Palmer, the audience rising on the announcement and giving three cheers. In the course of his address Governor Morton said:

"We can never understand what we owe to the army that saved the government. Had it not been for that army the rebellion would have succeeded, the Southern Confederacy would have been a reality. To-day we might have had not only a Northwestern confederacy but a Pacific confederacy, from which we would have

"It should be the aim of the Grand Army to bring within its fold every honorably discharged soldier and sailor, and, by the

he was to dine with the Queen, moved that a dispatch be cabled him conveying the hearty greetings of his comrades. The resolution was unanimously carried, but



tion of affairs, namely: receipts, \$828; disbursements, \$1,657. Few of the department's members are active in the work of one of the smallest, paid \$180, while Ohio paid \$80, and the other two States having the largest number of delegates did not contribute a cent.

A spirited discussion arose over the proposition to extend the organization to include the military organization "shall not make nominations for office or use its influence, as a secret organization, for partisan purposes." The speaker, who was well understood to-day as the honorably observed principle of the Grand Army. Complaints were made that the organization's officers were generally ignored by those having appointments to make. The following officers were named: senior vice commander, T. T. Owen, of Pennsylvania; junior vice commander, Joseph K. Hawley, of Connecticut; senior general, W. C. Chapman, of Washington.

The act which will cause the first year of the administration of General Grant to be remembered longer than the Grand Army